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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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S E C R E T RIYADH 005839

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: FM CRITICAL OF US INACTION, CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE
CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON

REF: A. REF A: RIYADH 5601
[1](#)B. REF B: RIYADH 5653

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter for
reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) In a July 19 press conference Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal emphasized the need for an immediate cease-fire and criticized Israeli aggression in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. He described the situation as "a real catastrophe that is taking place before the people's eyes and nobody is moving to end it." Using the same thinly veiled language of the July 14 SAG statement (Ref A) which placed the blame on Hizballah without naming names, the FM implicitly criticized the U.S. for "the current inaction by the international community in dealing with Israel's policies...to such an extent that prompted the Security Council to be neglectful in taking firm resolutions to resolve this crisis."

[1](#)2. (U) However, the FM did not back away from the SAG's initial criticism of Hizballah, stating "any faction, whoever it is and under any name, should not have the right to make this decision on their own without the state's knowledge and preparedness." Furthermore, responding to a question that suggested the SAG should have remained silent, rather than speak out against Hizballah, the FM said, "we have remained silent on numerous occasions, but that silence proved futile. When one sees what is happening in Lebanon, he cannot remain silent."

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The SAG's July 14 statement firmly held Hizballah responsible for the outbreak of the current conflict, a view that has been echoed in recent media reports, websites, and clerics' statements. The FM's subsequent July 19 comments reflect the Saudi public's increasing concern over the mounting destruction and death toll in Lebanon--without backing down from its criticism of Hizballah. The Saudi public is somewhat divided on the question of Hizballah responsibility for the violence, but is generally of one voice in its increasing concern and belief that Israeli military actions are causing innocent Arabs and Muslims to suffer.

OBERWETTER